

What is Claimed:

- 1 1. A method of determining a quality ranking of user traffic
2 directed from at least one traffic producer Web site to a traffic consumer Web site,
3 comprising the steps of:
 - 4 a) establishing a reference for the traffic consumer on the at least
5 one Web site of the traffic producer, the reference including a link
6 from the traffic producer to a traffic quality intermediary and a
7 unique identifier to identify the traffic consumer;
 - 8 b) receiving at the traffic quality intermediary user traffic data
9 associated with the user traffic directed from the traffic producer;
10 and
 - 11 c) determining a quality ranking of the user traffic based upon the
12 user traffic data.
- 1 2. A method of determining a quality ranking of user traffic in
2 accordance with claim 1, comprising the further step (d) of redirecting the user traffic
3 from the traffic quality intermediary to the traffic consumer Web site.
- 1 3. A method of determining a quality ranking of user traffic in
2 accordance with claim 2, comprising the further step (e) of reporting the quality
3 ranking.

1 4. A method of determining a quality ranking of user traffic in
2 accordance with claim 3, wherein the user traffic data is comprised of a plurality of
3 traffic data parameters and the step (c) of determining a quality ranking comprises
4 the steps of:

- 5 a) comparing each of the plurality of traffic data parameters of the
6 user traffic data against a baseline group, the baseline group
7 comprising a respective baseline for each of the user traffic data
8 parameters;
- 9 b) determining a deviation for each of the plurality of traffic data
10 parameters of the user traffic based on the comparison;
- 11 c) weighting the deviation for each of the plurality of traffic data
12 parameters with a predetermined weight assigned to each of
13 the plurality of traffic data parameters; and
- 14 d) combining each of the weighted deviations to arrive at the
15 traffic quality ranking.

1 5. A method of determining a quality ranking of user traffic in
2 accordance with claim 4, wherein before the step of comparing, at least one traffic
3 data parameter of the user traffic data is aggregated.

1 6. A method of determining a quality ranking of user traffic in
2 accordance with claim 5 wherein the aggregated user traffic data is normalized and
3 the quality ranking is determined based upon the normalized user traffic.

1 7. A method of determining a quality ranking of user traffic in
2 accordance with claim 6 wherein all traffic data parameters are aggregated and
3 normalized.

1 8. A method of determining a quality ranking of user traffic in
2 accordance with claim 5 wherein the user traffic is aggregated over either a period of
3 time or a number of user selections of the listing.

1 9. A method of determining a quality ranking of user traffic in
2 accordance with claim 8, wherein the user traffic is aggregated by separately
3 aggregating each of the plurality of traffic data parameters over either the period of
4 time or the number of user selections of the listing.

1 10. A method of determining a quality ranking of user traffic in
2 accordance with claim 9, wherein at least one of the aggregated plurality of traffic
3 data parameters is represented as a percentage of occurrences of that traffic data
4 parameter, over the period of time or the number of user selections of the listing.

1 11. A method of determining a quality ranking of user traffic in
2 accordance with claim 4, wherein the baseline group is based upon a predetermined
3 group of traffic producers.

1 12. A method of determining a quality ranking of user traffic in
2 accordance with claim 11, wherein the predetermined group of traffic producers is an
3 industry grouping into which the traffic consumer can be categorized or a grouping
4 based on a common factor to the traffic consumer and the others in the grouping or a
5 general grouping of traffic producers.

1 13. A method of determining a quality ranking of user traffic in
2 accordance with claim 11, wherein the predetermined group of traffic producers is an
3 industry grouping into which the traffic producer can be categorized or a grouping
4 based on a common factor to the traffic producer and the others in the grouping or a
5 general grouping of traffic producers.

1 14. A method of determining a quality ranking of user traffic in
2 accordance with claim 4, wherein the steps that comprise the step (c) of determining
3 a quality ranking are repeated for each of a plurality of baseline groups.

1 15. A method of determining a quality ranking of user traffic in
2 accordance with claim 4, user traffic data includes data received from the traffic
3 producer and data either determined or assigned by the traffic quality intermediary.

1 16. A method of determining a quality ranking of user traffic in
2 accordance with claim 15, wherein the data either determined or assigned by the
3 traffic quality intermediary includes the time of the received user traffic data.

1 17. A method of determining a quality ranking of user traffic in
2 accordance with claim 15, wherein the user traffic data comprises one or more of:

3 a) the URL of the traffic producer Web site;

4 b) a time associated with the receipt of the user traffic at the
5 traffic quality intermediary;

- 6 c) one or more keywords used in selecting the listing on the traffic
7 producer Web site;
- 8 d) the number of mouse clicks used in selecting the listing on the
9 traffic producer Web site;
- 10 e) a browser language;
- 11 f) a country;
- 12 g) screen settings of a user's computer used to select the listing;
- 13 h) cookies stored on the user's computer;
- 14 i) spatial coordinates relating to locations on a display of the
15 user's computer, on which the listing was displayed;
- 16 j) proxy usage through an Internet Service Provider (ISP);
- 17 k) browser type; and
- 18 l) an IP address of the user.

1 18. A method of determining a quality ranking of user traffic in
2 accordance with claim 4, wherein one or more of the plurality of traffic data
3 parameters for the baseline group is periodically changed.

1 19. A method of determining a quality ranking of user traffic in
2 accordance with claim 18, wherein the one or more of the plurality of traffic data
3 parameters for the baseline group that is periodically changed is changed based upon
4 user traffic data received subsequent to the last time there was a change.

1 20. A method of determining a quality ranking of user traffic in
2 accordance with claim 4, further comprising the step of determining a cost for the
3 traffic consumer to pay the traffic producer for user traffic based on the quality
4 ranking.

1 21. A method of determining the quality of user traffic in
2 accordance with claim 20, wherein the determined cost is a cost per access of the
3 listing on the traffic producer Web site.

1 22. A method of determining a quality ranking of user traffic in
2 accordance with claim 6, wherein the step of normalizing the aggregated data
3 comprises the step of setting ranges for each parameter of aggregated data to be
4 normalized and assigning a value for each range.

1 23. A method of determining the quality of user traffic in
2 accordance with claim 4 wherein the step of combining each of the weighted
3 deviations is comprised of the step of adding the combined weighted deviations.

1 24. A method of determining the quality of user traffic in
2 accordance with claim 4, wherein the quality ranking falls within a scale, the scale
3 having an upper limit and a lower limit.

1 25. A method of determining a quality ranking of user traffic in
2 accordance with claim 4, wherein, before step (a), a traffic consumer is registered
3 with the traffic quality intermediary, and the step of registering with the traffic
4 quality intermediary comprises the steps of:

5 a) receiving and storing at least one Universal Resource
6 Locator (URL), for the traffic consumer for the traffic quality
7 intermediary to use in redirecting the user traffic to the traffic
8 consumer;

9 b) assigning the traffic consumer at least one unique
10 identifier to identify the at least one URL of the traffic consumer in the
11 listing.

1 26. A method of determining a quality ranking of user traffic in
2 accordance with claim 4, wherein the amount of revenue generated at the traffic
3 consumer by user traffic from the traffic producer that is redirected by the traffic
4 quality intermediary is provided to the traffic quality intermediary and a user traffic
5 conversion potential ranking is determined based upon the quality ranking and the
6 revenue generated.

1 27. A method of determining a quality ranking of user traffic in
2 accordance with claim 26, wherein the user traffic conversion potential is determined
3 for either a period of time or a number of user selections of the listing .

1 28. A method of determining a quality ranking of user traffic in
2 accordance with claim 1 wherein the traffic consumer has a plurality of URL's and a
3 separate reference is established for each URL.

1 29. A method of determining a quality ranking of user traffic in
2 accordance with claim 4, wherein the step of weighting the deviation is adjustable by
3 the user.

1 30 A method of determining a quality ranking of user traffic in
2 accordance with claim 9, wherein the step of reporting the quality ranking is
3 comprised of the steps of:

4 a) providing the user with access to the traffic quality
5 intermediary to obtain the quality ranking; and

6 b) allowing the user to set the period of time or number of
7 user selections.

1 31. A method of determining a quality ranking of user traffic
2 directed from at least one traffic producer Web site to a traffic consumer Web site,
3 comprising the steps of:

4 a) establishing a reference for the traffic consumer on the
5 at least one Web site of the traffic producer, the reference including a
6 link from the traffic producer to a traffic quality intermediary and a
7 unique identifier to identify the traffic consumer;

b) receiving at the traffic quality intermediary user traffic data associated with the user traffic directed from the traffic producer;

10 c) determining a quality ranking of the user traffic based
11 upon the user traffic data; and

12 d) redirecting the user traffic from the traffic quality
13 intermediary to the traffic consumer Web site.

1 32. A method of determining a quality ranking of user traffic
2 directed from at least one traffic producer Web site to a traffic consumer Web site,
3 comprising the steps of:

a) establishing a reference for the traffic consumer on the at least one Web site of the traffic producer, the reference including a link from the traffic producer to a traffic quality intermediary and a unique identifier to identify the traffic consumer;

8 b) receiving at the traffic quality intermediary user traffic
9 data associated with the user traffic directed from the traffic producer;

10 c) redirecting the user traffic from the traffic quality
11 intermediary to the traffic consumer Web site;

d) determining a quality ranking of the user traffic based upon the user traffic data; and

14 e) reporting the quality ranking.

- 1 33. A method of determining a quality ranking of user traffic
2 directed from at least one traffic producer Web site to a traffic consumer Web site,
3 comprising the steps of:
- 4 a) establishing a reference for the traffic consumer on the
5 at least one Web site of the traffic producer, the reference including a
6 link from the traffic producer to a traffic quality intermediary and a
7 unique identifier to identify the traffic consumer;
- 8 b) receiving at the traffic quality intermediary user traffic
9 data associated with the user traffic directed from the traffic producer;
- 10 c) redirecting the user traffic from the traffic quality
11 intermediary to the traffic consumer Web site;
- 12 d) determining a quality ranking of the user traffic based
13 upon the user traffic data comprising the steps of:
- 14 i) comparing each of the plurality of traffic data
15 parameters of the user traffic data against a baseline
16 group, the baseline group comprising a respective
17 baseline for each of the user traffic data parameters,
- 18 ii) determining a deviation for each of the plurality of
19 traffic data parameters of the user traffic based on
20 the comparison,

- 21 iii) weighting the deviation for each of the plurality of
- 22 traffic data parameters with a predetermined weight
- 23 assigned to each of the plurality of traffic data
- 24 parameters, and
- 25 iv) combining each of the weighted deviations to arrive
- 26 at the traffic quality ranking; and
- 27 e) reporting the quality ranking.

1 34. A method of determining a quality ranking of user traffic
2 directed from at least one traffic producer Web site to a traffic consumer Web site,
3 comprising the steps of:

- 4 a) establishing a reference for the traffic consumer on the
- 5 at least one Web site of the traffic producer, the reference including a
- 6 link from the traffic producer to a traffic quality intermediary and a
- 7 unique identifier to identify the traffic consumer;
- 8 b) receiving at the traffic quality intermediary user traffic
- 9 data associated with the user traffic directed from the traffic producer,
- 10 the user traffic data comprised of a plurality of traffic data parameters;
- 11 c) redirecting the user traffic from the traffic quality
- 12 intermediary to the traffic consumer Web site;

15 i) aggregating at least one traffic data parameter of the
16 user traffic,

22 iii) determining a deviation for each of the plurality of traffic
23 data parameters of the user traffic based on the
24 comparison,

v) weighting the deviation for each of the plurality of traffic data parameters with a predetermined weight assigned to each of the plurality of traffic data parameters and if a deviation is normalized, using the normalized deviation for the weighting, and

vi) combining each of the weighted deviations to arrive at the traffic quality ranking; and

34 e) reporting the quality ranking.

1 35. A method of determining a quality ranking of user traffic
2 comprised of a plurality of users, each user directed from a traffic producer Web site
3 to a traffic consumer Web site, comprising the steps of:

4 a) establishing a reference for the traffic consumer on the
5 traffic producer Web site, the reference including a link from the traffic
6 producer to a traffic quality intermediary and a unique identifier to
7 identify the traffic consumer;

8 b) receiving at the traffic quality intermediary user traffic
9 data associated with each user of the user traffic directed from the
10 traffic producer, the user traffic data for each user comprised of a
11 plurality of traffic data parameters;

12 c) redirecting each user in the user traffic from the traffic
13 quality intermediary to the traffic consumer Web site;

14 d) determining a quality ranking of the user traffic based
15 upon the user traffic data comprising the steps of:

16 i) aggregating the user traffic data for each traffic
17 data parameter,

18 ii) comparing each of the plurality of traffic data
19 parameters of the aggregated user traffic data against a

- 20 baseline group, the baseline group comprising a respective
21 baseline for each of the user traffic data parameters,
- 22 iii) determining a deviation for each of the plurality
23 of traffic data parameters of the user traffic based on the
24 comparison,
- 25 iv) normalizing the determined deviation for at least
26 one of the plurality of traffic data parameters of the user
27 traffic,
- 28 v) weighting the normalized deviation for each of
29 the plurality of traffic data parameters with a predetermined
30 weight assigned to each of the plurality of traffic data
31 parameters, and
- 32 vi) combining each of the weighted deviations to
33 arrive at the traffic quality ranking; and
- 34 e) reporting the quality ranking.

1 36. A method of determining a baseline for use in a system or
2 method of determining a quality ranking of user traffic comprised of a plurality of
3 users, and each user is directed from a traffic producer Web site to a traffic consumer
4 Web site, and the user traffic has user traffic data associated with each user of the
5 user traffic and the user traffic data is comprised of a plurality of traffic data
6 parameters, comprising the steps of:

- 7 a) monitoring the user traffic between the traffic producer
8 Web site and the traffic consumer Web site for a predetermined period
9 of time;
- 10 b) collecting the user traffic data associated with each user
11 of the monitored user traffic;
- 12 c) storing the traffic data parameters of the collected user
13 traffic data;
- 14 d) aggregating separately each of the stored traffic data
15 parameters; and
- 16 e) determining a baseline for each of the aggregated traffic
17 data parameters.

1 37. A method of determining a baseline in accordance with claim
2 36, wherein the traffic producer monitored in step (a) is a plurality of traffic
3 producers with each of the plurality of traffic producers having a predetermined
4 relationship to each other.

1 38. A method of determining a baseline in accordance with claim
2 36, wherein traffic producer monitored in step (a) is a plurality of traffic producers.

1 39. A system of determining a quality ranking of user traffic
2 directed from at least one traffic producer Web site to a traffic consumer Web site,
3 comprising:

4 a) means for establishing a reference for the traffic
5 consumer on the at least one Web site of the traffic producer, the
6 reference including a link from the traffic producer to a traffic quality
7 intermediary and a unique identifier to identify the traffic consumer;

8 b) at least one computer for receiving at the traffic quality
9 intermediary user traffic data associated with the user traffic directed
10 from the traffic producer; and

11 c) at least one computer for determining a quality ranking
12 of the user traffic based upon the user traffic data.

1 40. A system of determining a quality ranking of user traffic
2 directed from at least one traffic producer Web site to a traffic consumer Web site,
3 comprising:

4 a) means for establishing a reference for the traffic
5 consumer on the at least one Web site of the traffic producer, the
6 reference including a link from the traffic producer to a traffic quality
7 intermediary and a unique identifier to identify the traffic consumer;

8 b) at least one computer for receiving at the traffic quality
9 intermediary user traffic data associated with the user traffic directed
10 from the traffic producer;

11 c) at least one computer for determining a quality ranking
12 of the user traffic based upon the user traffic data; and

13 d) means for redirecting the user traffic from the traffic
14 quality intermediary to the traffic consumer Web site.

1 41. A system of determining a quality ranking of user traffic
2 directed from at least one traffic producer Web site to a traffic consumer Web site,
3 comprising:

4 a) means for establishing a reference for the traffic
5 consumer on the at least one Web site of the traffic producer, the
6 reference including a link from the traffic producer to a traffic quality
7 intermediary and a unique identifier to identify the traffic consumer;

8 b) at least one computer for receiving at the traffic quality
9 intermediary user traffic data associated with the user traffic directed
10 from the traffic producer;

11 c) means for redirecting the user traffic from the traffic
12 quality intermediary to the traffic consumer Web site;

13 d) at least one computer for determining a quality ranking
14 of the user traffic based upon the user traffic data; and

15 e) means for reporting the quality ranking.

1 42. A system of determining a quality ranking of user traffic
2 directed from at least one traffic producer Web site to a traffic consumer Web site,
3 comprising:

- 4 a) means for establishing a reference for the traffic
5 consumer on the at least one Web site of the traffic producer, the
6 reference including a link from the traffic producer to a traffic quality
7 intermediary and a unique identifier to identify the traffic consumer;
- 8 b) at least one computer for receiving at the traffic quality
9 intermediary user traffic data associated with the user traffic directed
10 from the traffic producer;
- 11 c) means for redirecting the user traffic from the traffic
12 quality intermediary to the traffic consumer Web site;
- 13 d) at least one computer for determining a quality ranking
14 of the user traffic based upon the user traffic data that carries out the
15 steps of:
- 16 i) comparing each of the plurality of traffic data
17 parameters of the user traffic data against a baseline
18 group, the baseline group comprising a respective
19 baseline for each of the user traffic data parameters,
- 20 ii) determining a deviation for each of the plurality of
21 traffic data parameters of the user traffic based on
22 the comparison,
- 23 iii) weighting the deviation for each of the plurality of
24 traffic data parameters with a predetermined weight

25 assigned to each of the plurality of traffic data
26 parameters, and

27 iv) combining each of the weighted deviations to arrive
28 at the traffic quality ranking; and

29 e) means for reporting the quality ranking.

1 43. A system for determining a quality ranking of user traffic
2 directed from at least one traffic producer Web site to a traffic consumer Web site,
3 comprising:

4 a) means for establishing a reference for the traffic
5 consumer on the at least one Web site of the traffic producer, the
6 reference including a link from the traffic producer to a traffic quality
7 intermediary and a unique identifier to identify the traffic consumer;

8 b) at least one computer for receiving at the traffic quality
9 intermediary user traffic data associated with the user traffic directed
10 from the traffic producer, the user traffic data comprised of a plurality
11 of traffic data parameters;

12 c) means for redirecting the user traffic from the traffic
13 quality intermediary to the traffic consumer Web site;

- 14 d) at least one computer for determining a quality ranking
15 of the user traffic based upon the user traffic data that carries out the
16 steps of:
- 17 i) aggregating at least one traffic data parameter of the
18 user traffic,
- 19 ii) comparing each of the plurality of traffic data
20 parameters of the aggregated user traffic data
21 against a baseline group, the baseline group
22 comprising a respective baseline for each of the user
23 traffic data parameters,
- 24 iii) determining a deviation for each of the plurality of
25 traffic data parameters of the user traffic based on
26 the comparison,
- 27 iv) weighting the deviation for each of the plurality of
28 traffic data parameters with a predetermined weight
29 assigned to each of the plurality of traffic data
30 parameters, and
- 31 v) combining each of the weighted deviations to arrive
32 at the traffic quality ranking; and
- 33 e) means for reporting the quality ranking.

1 44. A system for determining a quality ranking of user traffic
2 directed from at least one traffic producer Web site to a traffic consumer Web site,
3 comprising:

4 a) means for establishing a reference for the traffic
5 consumer on the at least one Web site of the traffic producer, the
6 reference including a link from the traffic producer to a traffic quality
7 intermediary and a unique identifier to identify the traffic consumer;

8 b) at least one computer for receiving at the traffic quality
9 intermediary user traffic data associated with the user traffic directed
10 from the traffic producer, the user traffic data comprised of a plurality
11 of traffic data parameters;

12 c) means for redirecting the user traffic from the traffic
13 quality intermediary to the traffic consumer Web site;

14 d) at least one computer for determining a quality ranking
15 of the user traffic based upon the user traffic data that carries out the
16 steps of:

17 i) aggregating at least one traffic data parameter of the
18 user traffic,

19 ii) comparing each of the plurality of traffic data
20 parameters of the aggregated user traffic data
21 against a baseline group, the baseline group

- 22 comprising a respective baseline for each of the user
23 traffic data parameters,
- 24 iii) determining a deviation for each of the plurality of
25 traffic data parameters of the user traffic based on
26 the comparison,
- 27 iv) normalizing the determined deviation for at least one
28 of the plurality of traffic data parameters of the user
29 traffic,
- 30 v) weighting the deviation for each of the plurality of
31 traffic data parameters with a predetermined weight
32 assigned to each of the plurality of traffic data
33 parameters and if a deviation is normalized, using
34 the normalized deviation for the weighting, and
- 35 vi) combining each of the weighted deviations to arrive
36 at the traffic quality ranking; and
- 37 e) reporting the quality ranking.

1 45. A method of determining a quality ranking of user traffic in
2 accordance with claim 17, wherein the user traffic data is further comprised of the
3 URL of a Web site visited by a user prior to the traffic producer's Web site.

1 46. A method of determining a quality ranking of user traffic in
2 accordance with claim 31, wherein step (d) comprises the further step of modifying
3 the reference for the traffic consumer to allow tracking a user by a traffic quality
4 intermediary.

1 47. A method of determining a quality ranking of user traffic in
2 accordance with claim 46 wherein the step of modifying the reference comprises the
3 step of embedding software code in the reference to collect user traffic data.

1 48. A method of determining a quality ranking of user traffic in
2 accordance with claim 47, wherein the embedded software code is adapted to
3 execute when the reference for the traffic consumer is loaded and before a user clicks
4 on the reference for the traffic consumer.

1 49. A method of determining a quality ranking of user traffic in
2 accordance with claim 48, wherein the embedded software code supplies the traffic
3 quality intermediary with prior Web site traffic data relating to prior Web site visits
4 by a user.

1 50. A method of determining a quality ranking of user traffic in
2 accordance with claim 49, wherein the prior Web site traffic data is relayed to and
3 collected by the traffic quality intermediary before the user selects the reference to
4 the traffic consumer.

1 51. A method of determining a quality ranking of user traffic in
2 accordance with claim 50, wherein the collected prior Web site traffic data is stored
3 and analyzed by the traffic quality intermediary.

- 1 52. A method of determining a quality ranking of user traffic in
2 accordance with claim 50, wherein the collected prior Web site traffic data is
3 combined with other traffic data and analyzed by the traffic quality intermediary.